

**Town of Northfield, Municipal Building
Economic Development Committee Minutes
November 18, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm

- I. Roll Call:** Select Board member John Quinn; Select Board member Dave Maxwell; Leslie Striebe Go-Northfield; Nate Freeman; Steve Fitzhugh; Wendy Rae, NSB; Brad Denny; Town Manager Jeff Schulz.

Jeff Schulz started the meeting stating that the Committee had taken several months off, and that he scheduled this meeting to keep the economic development efforts in Northfield moving. Next, those present introduced themselves to the group.

II. Business Development in Northfield

1. Strategizing Session – Business Development efforts

Jeff Schulz stated that the primary reason for the meeting was to strategize potential business development efforts and ideas in Northfield. Jeff added that there are several economic development efforts currently underway in Northfield. There is the Brownsfield area wide planning effort; which consists of a state grant in which the State of VT Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and town hire consultants to assess underutilized properties with an eye towards redevelopment. The process will assess four to five properties and will result in recommendations for reuse of these properties including marketing strategies. Jeff added that he and Sarah Bartlett (DEC employee) have hired Stone Environmental to conduct the assessment. The Study should be completed in five to six months. Jeff has directed the consultant to also include recommendations in their report for use of the \$100,000 of economic development funds.

The Committee asked about the Cabot Hosiery expansion project. Dave Maxwell indicated that he spoke to representatives of Cabot recently and they indicated that the expansion project is moving forward. Jeff added that the Act 250 process for the project is nearly complete, and the notice of intent to issue the stormwater permit was recently released. Also, Cabot as has added new machines in their existing space and is leasing space in the Nantana Mills building.

Next, the group discussed the recent closure of Aubuchon Hardware and the Topp's property. Brad Denny mentioned that the closure may be an opportunity for Topp's to expand the store as discussed in the past. The group suggested that the Town Manager contact Topps to inquire about their possible expansion plans and to notify Topps that the Town is here to assist.

Nate Freeman stated that he and others in the community are interested in restarting the Northfield Business and Professional Association in Northfield (NBPA); which at one time was a very active business group in Northfield. The group agreed that this is a good idea and supported Nate in this effort.

Next, Steve Fitzhugh stated that he is working with a Northfield resident to research the implementation of free WIFI in Northfield.

Leslie stated that her group is also working on two new entrance gateway signs for the Town, and has developed a sign design. She has cost estimates for the two signs and is working on fund raising. A location for one of the signs has been secured on the South Main Street Mobile station property. Finding a site on the other side of town along Route 12 is proving more difficult as the property of the current sign is in foreclosure. Leslie identified a possible alternate site along Route 12, and Jeff Schulz will contact this property owner.

Next, John Quinn stated that the Town should attempt to get the Tax Stabilization measure before the voters at Town Meeting. He added that the vote on this ballot item failed by only a few votes and that the measure failed in part because the town needed to better explain the program. John stated that the Town, the EDC, and the Select Board need to better explain the program to the public. It was suggested that the group use Front Porch Forum to get the word out about the program.

Steve Fitzhugh stated that the Planning Commission is working to create a Northfield Development Review Board; which would result in the Zoning Board reviewing the development applications and the Planning Commission focusing on long range planning. This process would be better for developers and the Town as it will reduce the number of permit review meetings. Steve and Jeff will further research this process.

Committee Goals and Project

Next, the Committee summarized the list of projects and goals.

1. Review and comment on the Stone Environmental Area-wide proposal
2. Contact Topps Supermarket regarding their future plans
3. Restart the Northfield Business and Professional Association
4. Review VDAT report and identify additional projects for implementation
5. Implementation of Free WIFI in Northfield
6. Secure locations and funding for new entrance signs
7. Put the Tax Stabilization Program before Voters
8. Creation of a Development Review Board

III. Next Meeting: The Committee set the next EDC meeting for December 16th at 6:00 PM.

IV. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned 7:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Schulz, Clerk